

Natural Area Protection

Natural Area Dedication

What is Natural Area Dedication?

Natural Area Dedication is a conservation option available to landowners of highly significant natural areas. This is the strongest form of protection available for the preservation of our natural heritage resources. Dedication is the placement of natural areas, both privately and publicly owned, into Virginia's Natural Area Preserve System. The landowner retains ownership and transfer rights of the land, while voluntarily restricting those land uses which are incompatible with the conservation needs of the natural area.

How are Lands Dedicated?

A landowner who is interested in dedicating his/her land should contact the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). If the property qualifies for Natural Area Dedication, the landowner and DCR will write a legal document known as the Instrument of Dedication. The Instrument of Dedication will address factors such as a legal description of the area to be dedicated, the conservation objectives for the site, the extent of public use desired, and the land use(s) that will be restricted. The director of DCR has the sole authority to approve an Instrument of Dedication. Upon approval, the director and the landowner will sign the document, which places the land into Virginia's Natural Area Preserve System. The document will be recorded with the deed of the property thereby ensuring permanent protection of the natural area against conversion to inappropriate uses.

What Lands Qualify for Natural Area Dedication?

Only the most significant natural areas in Virginia are considered for

Natural Area Dedication. To be eligible, a property must include one or more of these natural values:

- ◆ habitat for rare, threatened or endangered plant or animal species;
- ◆ rare or state significant natural communities;
- ◆ rare or state significant geologic sites.

How are Dedicated Lands Managed?

Once natural areas are placed into Virginia's Natural Area Preserve System, DCR stewardship staff assists landowners in developing management plans and conducting management activities. Natural Area Preserves are managed to retain their natural character and to ensure the long-term survival of natural heritage resources. A variety of management techniques is used to preserve native ecological systems, rare or vanishing flora and fauna, and significant geological features. Management may in-



clude repairing trails, posting boundaries, studying hydrology, controlling invasive species, conducting prescribed burns and restoring damaged natural communities.

What are the Advantages to Natural Area Dedication?

Through Natural Area Dedication, a landowner is rewarded with the pride of contributing to a statewide conservation effort. Dedication provides the landowner with the

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satisfaction of preserving an area of beauty for the enjoyment of future generations. In addition, landowners may receive financial in-

centives for dedicating their land. Examples include possible reduced assessment for real estate purposes, reduction of federal es-

tate and Virginia inheritance taxes, and a charitable deduction for state and federal income tax purposes.

For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation.



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